

# The Impact of the Booker Prize on the Evolution of Postcolonial Indian Fiction in English

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**Abstract - Postcolonial scholars consider India as a fertile research ground due to the country's lengthy colonial past and vibrant modern culture. In addition, in comparison to other colonial powers, Britain's imperialism is rather pragmatic. The goal here is to maximize profit, not spread the gospel. Under the rise of Orientalism, India was the first Nation to lay literary imprint on the West, such an equation was later reversed under colonial intervention. Writers of the Indian diaspora, starting with Salman Rushdie, have received and continue to receive significant critical acclaim. The Bloomsbury group befriended Mulk Raj Anand, but before Rushdie there was Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan. Women authors such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, and Chitra Banerjee are now often included in anthologies and syllabi. Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, and Shashi Deshpande came before them. This study aims to examine how modern Indian English literature is progressing in its depiction of postcolonial themes via fiction. Making an effort to assess the writers' thematic concerns and critical research from a postcolonial viewpoint is appropriate. This study contributes to our appreciation of the subtleties present in modern Indian literature. Female Indian authors who have won the Man Booker International Prize are also discussed.**

**Keywords - Booker-Winning, Novel, Indian English Literature, Postcolonialism**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indian culture is the world's oldest, yet its diversity makes it difficult to categorize. Cultural practices include artistic expression, social organization, and shared worldviews that have been passed down through the generations. A person's cultural practices are their contribution to the larger community. Assumptions about the word's use suggest that it refers to a civilization that has been colonized, but these generalizations obscure important nuances in the connotations of the phrase in different nations. By and large, the 'Third World' is meant when one talks of the 'postcolonial' age. There is a fine line between Third World and Postcolonial writing in the present literary landscape. This 'Third World' example is not sufficient to support the overnight idea. Several political, social, literary, and cultural variables have interacted throughout time to produce this. Despite the fact that the British Empire was conquered for two centuries, India has evolved as an essential thought in the globe due to various instances including economic progress and rest. English and Indian regional literature have both been influenced by the British, and Indian literature is no longer just "Indianized" literature. The British imperialism and 'colonialism' thought is effective that assists in construction of the literary influence on Indian as the autonomous or the semi-independent group of territories or prince do under the administration of British. The Booker Prize is widely considered to be the most prestigious literary prize in

the English-speaking world. It has propelled previously unknown authors to overnight success and has helped established authors cement their place in literary history. Once only available to authors from Commonwealth countries, the literary award is now fiercely contested by authors from all across the English-speaking globe. Despite stiff competition, however, some authors with Indian ties have won the prize throughout the years. Take a peek at these authors who brought literary honor to India.

It's spot on to say that contemporary Postcolonial diasporic authors are "manipulating details of India" and its people in literary writings. But it would be unfair to pin this on Postcolonial diasporic authors alone. Misrepresentation of reality is partly attributable to the thorny subject of award politics and the worldwide receptions of their literary writings. The politics of awards and the warm reception accorded to works with an unconventional portrayal of India are not limited to works of literature. Western film reviewers have always favored Western filmmakers, even if these filmmakers have portrayed India as a place of snake charmers, magicians, necromancers, and beggars, and promoted the West as superior to the East. For them specifically, the land is "an area of darkness," as V.S. Naipaul puts it. We have witnessed, of late, how Gurinder Chadha's partition movie Viceroy's House (2017) warps the knowledge of Indian

liberation fight movement. In her Guardian essay titled "I Watched this Servile Pantomime and Wept," Fatima Bhutto contends that the liberation struggle in India was not the primary reason for the British to leave the Indian subcontinent. The British eventually withdrew from India for one and only one reason: the weariness brought on by World War II. The arrogant Bhutto claims that "Film is a glossy imperial version of India's traumatic partition that scandalously misrepresents the historical reality" (The Guardian, 3 March 2017). Despite the fact that this material is all made up, the film has received a lot of positive attention in the West. The Indian blockbuster film *Lagaan* (2001) is a good example of a work that may be discussed in this context in relation to the politics of award(s). Why didn't *Lagaan* win the Academy Award? Why wasn't it praised more by the Western public? The criticisms will continue to be heard, even now, and the best response to the queries is that "Academy did not like cricket." A different outcome is possible if cricket became the national game in the USA. *Slumdog Millionaire* (2009), which Arindam Chaudhary bluntly calls "A phony poseur that has been made only to mock India for the viewing pleasure of the First World" (Others, 25 January 2009), was widely praised by Western filmgoers and won eight major awards, including the Academy Award. Further explaining his stance, Chaudhary says:

*The film has no redeeming qualities whatsoever.... Slums, open defecation, rioting, blinding and maiming children to turn them become "better beggars," petty, and every other unpleasant stereotype about India are all shown in the protagonist's life. Even more so, the fact that it has won so many prizes and been nominated for so many more shows that the paradigm of cinema and the recognition of films are in the hands of a small group of illiterate imperialists. (ibid)*

When Aravind Adiga's book *The White Tiger* won the Man Booker award in 2008, academics and critics once again questioned the 'Occidental' understanding of the 'Orient' and the authenticity and legitimacy of the committee and the process of picking a novel for the award. The 2008 Booker jury foreman, Mr. Portillo, explained his vote by saying he was searching for something to "blow his socks off." The literary community was in an uproar over this remark. It's no surprise that the success of *The White Tiger*, which went so far as to split our nation India into "Dark India" and "India of the Light," has raised a lot of issues about Indian diasporic authors, their topics, innovative techniques, and sincere reception. An appropriate remark from Amrit Dhillon: "Adiga is the same [as Naipaul] focusing on everything that is bad and corrupt" (Telegraph, 18 Oct. 2008). In an attempt to demonstrate how Indian [diasporic] authors have portrayed India as black and unclean, which fascinates the form of re-Orientalism, Om Prakash Dwivedi and Lisa Lau have written a joint article.

In addition to the factors already mentioned—namely, the jury's deliberate preference for *The White Tiger* as winner—the rejection of a more substantial novel, *Sea of Poppies* (2008) by Amitav Ghosh, which ransacked the presence of the resistance in British colonialism in its various forms and left no stone unturned in presenting the palimpsest of British colonial subjugation, persists as a substantial reason. It shows how colonialism's web of influence contributed to economic and social inequality in India and other parts of the subcontinent under imperial control. The jury's verdict on *The White Tiger* has caused controversy in the academic community since it resulted in the demise of the *Sea of Poppies*. The committee decided against a work that detailed the brutality of the colonial era. Therefore, they struck two birds with one stone: ridiculed India by presenting prize to Adiga and covered the colonial realities by rejecting Ghosh. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the merits of one book over another. The purpose of this article is to reveal the unexplored avenues that contribute to *Sea of Poppies* edging out of *The White Tiger* for second place in the prize race. We also make an effort to analyze and emphasize the themes found in *The White Tiger* that have caught the attention of the jury and academics across the world.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Monaco, Angelo (2018)** The mix of fantasy and reality in Roy's second book, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), is less concerned with an aesthetic function and more concerned with an anti-global one, even if it incorporates certain magic realist aspects borrowed from her Booker-winning first novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). The book promotes a poetics of loss and a radical criticism of social concerns including anti-globalization, ecology, anti-nuclear movements, and land rights in Kashmir via the use of vulnerability motifs that impact persons and environments alike. This article delves into how gender issues, caste discrimination, wounded landscapes, and religious conflicts animate a story of decay and hope in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by exploring the novel's juxtaposition of Bharati fantasy and historical realism. Roy simultaneously cautions and invites readers to consider the inconsistencies of modern, postcolonial India by referencing Hindu epics on the one hand and the intellectual activity characteristic of her non-fiction writings on the other. Arundhati Roy's second and last book was a twenty-year project. Several volumes of nonfiction addressing such sociopolitical questions as anti-globalization, environmentalism, anti-nuclear campaigns, and land rights in Kashmir were published by the Indian writer between his Booker Prize-winning debut novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). Roy's latest novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, also examines the effects of Partition, but it lacks the cohesive family drama set in southern India that characterized her first book. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is told from a variety of

viewpoints, both objective and subjective, in the course of its twelve chapters, which alternate between linear time progression and flashbacks. Anjum and Tilo are the main characters, but there is also a large cast of supporting players that serve to stretch out the story.

**Kumar, Shraavan & Kaur, Harleen (2017)** This lecture will analyze the thematic analysis of Arundhati Roy who got this prestigious award in past decade and Kiran Desai in 2006. Arundhati Roy is a celebrity and a towering literary lioness after being the first Indian writer win the coveted Booker Prize and a million-dollar book contract. A native of Kerala, where her award-winning book *The God of Small Things* is based, Arundhati Roy (One of People Magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People in the World 1998") is now in her late 30s and resides in Delhi. Poetically told, the book centers on the deaths of Estha and Rahel, Indian twins, and their half-British cousin Sophie Mol, age 9, who were vacationing with them. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai depicts political upheaval in India. The book seems to focus mostly on the impact the West has had on India and Indians, particularly how this impact has led to the country's oppression and debasement. Globalization, diversity, economic injustice, fanaticism, and terrorist bloodshed are just some of the topics that Kiran Desai's outstanding new book manages to examine with empathy and clarity. Despite being set in the mid-1980s, it appears the ideal type of post-9/11 fiction.

**Thamarana, Simhachalam (2015)** At the start, a quick overview of Postcolonial literature is to be presented. The meaning of the term "postcolonialism" and the history and evolution of this field of study must be investigated. Women authors like Jamaica Kincaid, Isabelle Illende, and Eavan Boland will be shown alongside male authors like J. M. Coetzee, Derek Walcott, and J. M. Rushdie. In addition, a critical overview of the works of a few of the most well-known writers associated with the Postcolonialist literary movement is provided. Reads to be analyzed for their use of postcolonial themes include *Things Fall Apart*, *Midnight's Children*, *Disgrace*, *The English Patient*, *Ceremony*, *A Small Place*, and *Decolonizing the Mind*. This study also highlights the many places, points of view, and narrative styles in which recurring motifs and topics such as "identity," "language," and "racism" are presented. Because of the political and contextual implications of this movement, it deserves close scrutiny. Finally, the stated literature review is used to derive conclusions.

**Ghosh, Subham (2020)** Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a portrait of India shortly after its freedom. The protagonist, Balram Halwai, struggles throughout the book to emerge from the "darkness" and forge an identity for himself as a successful businessman. This paper will use the novel's characters as examples to demonstrate how, long after the colonial rulers have been removed, the people of a colonized nation

continue to imitate others in an effort to create a new sense of identity and establish themselves.

**Santhi.V, Jeya & Dr.R.Selvam (2015)** Rohinton Mistry, an author from the Indian diaspora, writes on the difficulties of assimilation. He was a member of the Parsi community, originally from India, but he moved to Canada when he was a young adult. Many obstacles await him in the new social context as a Parsi-Indian Canadian author. Through his characters, he expresses the anguish and triumphs of Indian authors who leave their homeland for the United States in search of a better life. Shortlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize, his first full-length book *Such a Long Journey* demonstrates his genuine concern for the Parsi minority in India and for post-colonial India more generally. Through his unrivaled protagonist Gustad Noble, the author foresees the tipping point that would lead to the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 and East Pakistan's eventual secession to become Bangladesh as a result of the social and political unrest in India under the Indira Gandhi dictatorship. The study analyzes the representation of Indian culture and family life in the context of the subcontinent's volatile postcolonial politics, as well as the experience of Parsi Indians living in the United States during the unrest of the early 1970s.

#### THE ENGLISH NOVEL OF POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

As Salman Rushdie writes in his collection of essays titled "Imaginary Homelands," the imperial sun has set. Although the luminous plurality of this title was somewhat eclipsed by the inadequate postcolonial regimes denounced in the text of the novel, the Ivorian novelist Ahmadou Kourouma had already used the solar metaphor to describe decolonization in Africa in his 1968 novel *The Suns of Independence*. A new phenomenon, globalization, which overwhelms them because of the "fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics" it provokes, appears before these countries have even had time to reterritorialize their imagination after celebrating independence and recounting the identity crisis they faced as young, independent nations. Authors like Arundhati Roy consider the dominance of multinational and private firms in globalization as a sort of American imperialism, while Samir Amin views underdevelopment as a byproduct of global capital accumulation. Amitav Ghosh, in contrast to Arundhati Roy, who argues that the British Empire has morphed into an Anglophone one, sees in the Iraq War not the fingerprint of a new American empire but "a new phase in the evolution of the most powerful political force of the last two centuries, namely, the Anglophone Empire."

#### Post-independence or Postcolonialism

Post-independence literature was a hot topic for a time among literary critics from decolonized nations, particularly India. It's no secret that the prefix "post"

reflects the Western practice of analyzing literary works in relation to broader historical shifts. Gauri Viswanathan makes a connection in *Masks of Conquest* between the British colonization of India and the birth of English-language scholarship.<sup>10</sup> It was the collision of European thought with that of "native or indigenous peoples" elsewhere, the mixing of their destinies, and the efforts of learned societies that laid the groundwork for modern social sciences like economics, geography, anthropology, and language. Mary Louise Pratt<sup>11</sup> argues that the institutionalization of domineering models like patriarchy and empire are reflected in the institutionalization of knowledge silos, disciplinary borders, the oppressive linearity of a systematic approach, and the crushing weight of the metropolitan center on the periphery's literary and artistic output. Decolonization of occupied lands was meant to coincide with the elimination of disciplinary silos. There seems to be a translation of this epistemic schism into the terms inter- and multidisciplinary. However, more than the term "post-independent" which presents the point of view of the previously colonized, or the terms "inter" and "transcultural" which imply an equal status granted to all cultures and the possibility of transcendence, it is the term "postcolonial" which embeds the reality of colonialism in the very signifier that is more frequently used.

Both the hyphenated and unhyphenated forms of the phrase first appeared in the 1959 editions of the Oxford English Dictionary and the American Heritage Dictionary, respectively. It is the academic discipline that grew out of the expansion of English studies to include the study of the United States as well as more modern national and regional literatures like those of Australia, Canada, and the Caribbean. Like the phrases "third world" and "Commonwealth," the label "postcolonial" assumes that the critic is situated in an imperial and metropolitan zone, lending authority to his or her analysis. Several people have spoken out against the demeaning and often segregationist focus on the center and the periphery. As a result, a number of counterarguments have surfaced, including the claims that "the third world does not exist" and "Commonwealth Literature does not exist," as well as the concept of "over worlding the third world" to put things in perspective. Even in the so-called Southern countries throughout the 1980s, however, the term "postcolonial" persisted. The intrinsic tension between the two phrases "post independent" and "postcolonial" and therefore the conflict between two divergent perspectives of the world, remained noticeable until the end of the past century. For example, in 2000, Gauri Viswanathan oversaw a special issue of *ARIEL* (A Review of English Literature) titled "Institutionalizing English Studies: The Postcolonial/Post independence Challenge." Benita Parry's wariness about the "downgrading of anti-imperial texts written by national liberation movements" and the obliteration of "the role of the native as historical subject and combatant, possessor of an-other knowledge and producer of alternative traditions" sensitizes us as well to the inherent danger in putting too much emphasis on post-independence reverse discourses. Concerns about the

disproportionate focus on the postcolonial at the expense of the colonial have been voiced by Laura Chrisman as well. It has been said that "Imperialism, in remaining unanalyzed, also remains unwittingly albeit, hegemonic."

## THE ROLE OF INDIANS IN THE BOOKER PRIZE

Many authors of Indian ancestry have been honored with the Man Booker Prize since the award's establishment. Arvind Adiga, along with Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai, is the fourth Indian-born author to receive the Man Booker Prize. The Indian-origin V. S. Naipaul earned the prize in 1971 for *In a Free State*. The tales in this book are compiled into a book. In 1979, his work *A Bend in the River* made the Booker shortlist. In 1975, Ruth Praver Jhabwala's *Heat and Dust* was awarded the Booker Prize. The *Siege of Krishnapur*, by British author J. G. Farrell, was awarded the Booker prize in 1973. The book is set in the made-up city of Krishnapur. The events of the story are based on those of the First War of Indian Independence, which took place in and around the cities of Lucknow and Kanpur in 1857. Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, and Rohinton Mistry are just a few of the Indian writers whose works have made the Booker shortlist. Shortlisted for the prize were three books written by Anita Desai: *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984), and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999). Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2008) also made the finalists list. Such a *Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), and *Family Matters* (2002) are the three books by Rohinton Mistry that have been nominated for the Man Booker Prize.

## Award-winning Indian women authors

The fact that two Indian women have received the Man Booker award for writing is noteworthy. Kiran Desai and Arundhati Roy are their names. They share a care for the natural world as shown in their respective works of literature. Motivated by the prospect of rescuing the planet from environmental collapse, today's writers have set themselves the difficult task of addressing nature as a significant character in their works of fiction and nonfiction. When approached from an eco-critical standpoint, these writings reveal the interconnectedness of the many elements that make up an ecosystem, including human society, government, and natural phenomena. The literary text's environment, both literal and metaphorical, contributes significantly to our comprehension of the work as a whole. Kiran Desai, daughter of the renowned Indian author Anita Desai, is a gifted young English writer from India. Since her arrival on the scene in the late 1990s, she has established herself as a unique voice within the constellation of Indian women authors writing in English. Her first book, 1998's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, takes a humorous look at human nature. She has leapt into fame and won international acclaim with the publication of her The Man Booker Prize Winning Novel the *Inheritance of*

Loss (2006) which on the one hand deals with social, political, and economic problems of the people of contemporary society in India and, on the other the social and psychological problems faced by Indian immigrants in America and England. Globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism, terrorist violence, immigration, racial discrimination, postcolonialism, alienation, exile, and westernization are only few of the present worldwide themes that are examined in the book. The environmental issue is also quite important. The book *The Inheritance of Loss* instantly grabs the reader's attention due to its ecocentric perspective. Her portrayal of mountains and the inhabitants of Kalimpong, the changing seasons and the interior mindscape of her characters are enthralling. The most striking thing about her work is the attention to detail she shows in describing her characters' homes. Her story's momentum never flags, and that's what holds the reader's attention. Kanchenjunga and its imposing peak serve as a stunning backdrop for the novel's location and people, providing a remarkable representation of Nature's gifts. In the very first line of Kiran Desai's opening chapter, the reader is taken back to that vibrant scene.

There has been some progress in women's status in the decades after independence as a result of concerted efforts to advance their rights, free education for girls, quotas in local body elections, and specific laws designed to protect women's interests. Feminist authors have neglected to include men's difficulties in their depictions of these historical and social realities. Their male dominance message should be evaluated based on its literary merits. In India, feminism takes several forms. In traditional cultures, women are expected to take on many responsibilities. She has several hats to wear, from daughter to sister to niece to aunt to wife to grandma to various in-laws. She has a deep emotional and psychological connection to each of these people. She vacillates between these two extremes, seeming both weak and powerful. When she's in charge, she has the freedom to make her own decisions. When she is in a subordinate position, her agency is taken away from her. When she imagines freedom, she envisions being released from the obligations listed above. In Western civilization woman is considered of in connection to a man and not in relation to the different functions she performs in traditional Indian society. They solely care about their male offspring. Thus, whereas we have a broad conception of freedom, they have a narrow one. To adopt the Western emancipation model is to sever all ties necessary for assuming other personae. Because of this, individuality will flourish, and eventually it will tear apart the family structure, the cornerstone of every functional society. As a result, future generations in India will be unfamiliar with the many responsibilities that Indian women traditionally played and would value hostel wardens more than their own mothers and fathers. Feminism in today's culture is essentially a tactic used to foster a sense of exclusivity among certain demographics.

After all, in today's India, women have equal rights and may choose whatever career path they choose. Feminism is nothing more than a debate about gender and discrimination. Its only focus is on advancing women's rights via the elimination of sexist norms and the introduction of new ones. Inequality is the real issue. True feminism springs from the universal aspiration for justice and equality. It has to do with the ease with which men and women may get equal rights, duties, and treatment. When women confront discrimination, they may find solidarity in the movement, while males fighting for equality frequently have to do it alone. Birth control, domestic abuse, and sexual assault are all examples of human concerns that affect women. As human beings, we have an obligation to overcome and safeguard these social problems. This does not imply supplanting males with women or attempting to expand one's sphere of influence into another's. Instead of labeling such social movements as "feminism" or "masculinity," we often examine the success or exploitation of groups that can be readily defined on the basis of sex, religion, faith, race, caste, or whatever. Oppressor and oppressed, powerful and weak, poor and affluent, etc., are all appropriate labels. The goal of our efforts should be to make everyone's life more secure. By highlighting the importance of both genders and their mutually beneficial relationships, postcolonial English literature may be seen as an effort to promote gender equality. Financial self-sufficiency and self-assurance for both genders may greatly aid in resisting all forms of abuse and aggression done on women. Women shouldn't risk losing their femininity by trying to adopt male traits. Women should be women and men should be men; each should carry out their duties without causing damage to others and fill their respective roles without taking advantage of those around them. Young people shouldn't feel excluded from society due of feminist propaganda; rather, they should become cheerful and productive and build confidence in themselves.

## CONCLUSION

We can sum up the English-language Indian book has seen phenomenal popularity in the West. One merely has to look at the Booker award list in the previous twenty years to judge its performance. The rise in popularity of Indian authors writing in English has resulted in a plethora of scholarly works on the topic. Texts which appease the exotic lens of 'Orientalism' or which bear colonial legacies are pushed to the fore to appease the western academic establishment, as has been examined and observed. As the English language and literature spread across India, it inevitably influenced Indian literature. Indians have also contributed significantly to the canon of English literature. There was a lot of debate over how good or bad the literature written in English about India was compared to the literature written in other Indian languages. All elements included in the chosen works have been evaluated for their

usefulness and connection to the postcolonial stance. The colonialists try to influence the countries under their control to adopt their language and culture by whatever means necessary, including via the use of language and identification symbols and the replication of mundane, everyday activities.

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